National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Awareness of climate change and the dietary choices of young adults in Finland: A population-based cross-sectional study

Author(s): Korkala EAE, Hugg TT, Jaakkola JJK
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Abstract:

Climate change is a major public health threat that is exacerbated by food production. Food items differ substantially in the amount of greenhouse gases their production generates and therefore individuals, if willing, can mitigate climate change through dietary choices. We conducted a population-based cross-sectional study to assess if the understanding of climate change, concern over climate change or socio-economic characteristics are reflected in the frequencies of climate-friendly food choices. The study population comprised 1623 young adults in Finland who returned a self-administered questionnaire (response rate 64.0%). We constructed a Climate-Friendly Diet Score (CFDS) ranging theoretically from -14 to 14 based on the consumption of 14 food items. A higher CFDS indicated a climate-friendlier diet. Multivariate linear regression analyses on the determinants of CFDS revealed that medium concern raised CFDS on average by 0.51 points (95% confidence interval (CI) 0.03, 0.98) and high concern by 1.30 points (95% CI 0.80, 1.80) compared to low concern. Understanding had no effect on CFDS on its own. Female gender raised CFDS by 1.92 (95% CI 1.59, 2.25). Unemployment decreased CFDS by 0.92 (95% CI -1.68, -0.15). Separate analyses of genders revealed that high concern over climate change brought about a greater increase in CFDS in females than in males. Good understanding of climate change was weakly connected to climate-friendly diet among females only. Our results indicate that increasing awareness of climate change could lead to increased consumption of climate-friendly food, reduction in GHG emissions, and thus climate change mitigation.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Europe

European Region/Country: European Country

Other European Country : Finland

Health Impact: ☑

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☑

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Mitigation

Resource Type: ☑

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: ☑

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified